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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the perceptions of a group of White and Hispanic preservice teachers toward the English language learners they tutored over the course of a semester. Nine White participants and five Hispanic participants were interviewed. Comparisons of interview data reveal that White participants and Hispanic participants chose to identify with their tutees in different ways, had different expectations for their tutees, and offered different suggestions for intervention on behalf of their tutees. The bilingualism and life experiences of Hispanic participants enabled them to assess and work with the language and academic skills of their tutees more effectively than their White, monolingual, monocultural counterparts. The impacts of life experiences and university training are discussed. (Contains 36 references.) (Author/SM)

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# *An Exploration of Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions of Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*

SHERRY MARX, The University of Texas at Austin

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# *An Exploration of Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions of Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*

SHERRY MARX, The University of Texas at Austin

*This qualitative study explores the perceptions of a group of White and Hispanic pre-service teachers toward the English language learners they tutored over the course of a semester. Nine White participants and five Hispanic participants were interviewed. Comparisons of interview data reveal that White participants and Hispanic participants chose to identify with their tutees in different ways, had differing expectations for their tutees, and offered different suggestions for intervention on behalf of their tutees. The bilingualism and life experiences of Hispanic participants enabled them to assess and work with the language and academic skills of their tutees more effectively than their White, monolingual, "monocultural" counterparts. The impacts of life experience and university training are discussed in this paper.*

## INTRODUCTION

While the student population of American schools becomes more multicultural, the faces of American teachers become more homogeneous. Indeed, as we enter the 21st century, it is estimated that nearly 90% of the teacher workforce is White [1], while more than 42% of the public school population is made up of people of color (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lara, 1994). Included among this growing number of children of color is the growing population of English language learners. In 1991, for example, 2.3 million K12 students were classified as English as a second language (ESL) students (Clair, 1995). In the year 2000, it is estimated that the "ESL student population will be increasing at two and a half times the rate of the general student population" (*U.S. Congressional Record*, 1989, as cited by Clair, 1995, p. 189).

Because these numbers were generated more than a decade ago, it is likely that they under-represent the size and growth rate of the current ESL population. All of these numbers—the number of students of color, the number of ESL students, and the number of White teachers—have continued to increase steadily (Clair, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Teacher preparation programs reflect this discrepancy between students and teachers, as White women make up the majority of teacher education students (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Indeed, as a Teaching Assistant (TA) and Assistant Instructor (AI) in the Education Department of a large university, I have found myself working almost exclusively with idealistic young White women.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The fact that nearly 90 percent of the teacher population is White may not initially appear to be a problem in education today. Some White teachers, of

course, are able to reach children of color in loving and exemplary ways (see Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, many other White teachers believe that they are meeting the needs of their students of color, when, in fact, they are not (see Spindler & Spindler, 1989 and Shultz, 1997 for excellent examples of this phenomenon). Others honestly express that, despite their love for their students and their desires to become highly effective teachers, they never really know how well they are reaching their children of color (see Paley, 1979).

A White teacher's membership in the dominant American culture adds another layer of complexity to this picture because most White people tend to view themselves and their experiences as "normal" and "neutral," rather than as affected by race (Alba, 1990; Chennault 1998; Frankenberg, 1993; Hartigan, 1999; McIntosh, 1988). Moreover, the literature on teacher beliefs about themselves and their students indicates that teacher beliefs are long held and exceedingly tenacious. A teacher education student's own school experience, her community, and her family life all work to construct these beliefs over a lifetime (Butt, Raymond, & Townsend, 1990; Doyle, 1997; Lortie, 1975; Paine, 1989). Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989, as cited in Tiezzi & Cross, 1997), add that beliefs about what makes for a good teacher are highly context specific and personal. That is, the schools a teacher attended as a child and the teachers she loved may remain her favored models for successful education no matter where and whom she ends up teaching.

Thus, a teacher from an all-White suburban or rural school may not know how to adjust her expectations and beliefs when she is placed in a school district where the cultural, racial, economic, and language contexts of the students are quite different from those she experienced growing up (Tiezzi & Cross, 1997). With the understanding that the White experience is generally considered normal in the United States, the problems that can emerge because 90 percent of teachers are White and nearly 50 percent of their students are not White begin to materialize.

## Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions a group of White teacher education students held regarding the ESL students they tutored over the course of one semester. The class in which they were enrolled, Second Language Acquisition, was a course required of elementary education majors who had not taken a foreign language. At the time of this study, I was the TA for this course. Each semester, the professor and I arranged for our students to tutor in local schools with large ESL populations. However, we did not require any reflective assignments from our students concerning this experience and we rarely talked about tutoring during class time. Consequently, I became concerned that students might be having rewarding experiences the class was not tapping into, and even more concerned that students might be having negative

experiences that may have reinforced any stereotypes and prejudices they felt (an issue raised by Haberman and Post, 1992). Thus, I conducted this study to find out just what the students were making of the tutoring experience and how the professor and I could improve the field assignment.

### LIMITATIONS

Because of its exploratory nature, this study has certain limitations. First, the study involves relative few participants. The reason for this is that my priority in purposive sampling was quality rather than quantity. Instead of canvassing a large population for cursory opinions, I turned to a small number of highly motivated volunteers who were eager to discuss their experience in depth. My goal was to "re-present" their experience in their own words and stories (Abu-Lughold, 1991). Such richness and vividness of detail, I felt, would enable the readers of this study to discover parallels with their own experience.

Second, for various reasons, the portraits that emerge in this study are uneven in amount of detail. One reason for this difference is that my relationships with some participants evolved differently from those with others. Carol, for example, was so dedicated to the "volunteer experience" that we met several times to talk about her previous experiences and to share advice. I therefore had time to get to know her better than most other participants. Moreover, some participants simply made a stronger impression on me. Carola and Elina, for example, shared such interesting, revealing stories that I met with each of them several times. On the other hand, the interviews with Ginny, Katie, and Irma were narrowly focused, and I met with each of them only once. A third reason for the difference in detail is my experimentation with the best format for data gathering. On two occasions, I met with small groups of students; however, the dynamics of these group discussions interfered with my getting to know the participants well, and I went back to individual interviews.

The third limitation of this exploratory study is that its methodology provides only two main techniques for ensuring internal validity (or "credibility," as preferred by Guba and Lincoln, 1985). The first is prolonged engagement. As the TA for the class for several semesters, I had a good understanding of the class objectives and the general characteristics of the students. In addition, I got to know the students during many in-class discussions and during the interviews. The second technique for ensuring internal validity was feedback from member checks. After each interview, I e-mailed the participant a summary of our conversation and asked for comments and corrections. All students approved these summaries with little or no corrections. These measures are good indicators of credibility, but the credibility could have been bolstered even more with triangulation of methodology, data collection, theory, or multiple analysts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). For example, as compelling as the sto-

ries seem, they would have been more powerful had I observed actual tutoring sessions and collected reflective journals from the participants. I wonder now how the White participants would have reacted had the findings of this study been shared with them. An analysis of their reactions to the findings would have given readers and researchers alike insight into the depth and tenaciousness of the beliefs these young women expressed.

This paper is an initial exploration of the strongly held beliefs and prejudices many White teachers bring with them into their relationships with second language learners of color. The pain these beliefs and prejudices cause English language learners is certainly evident in the stories shared by the Hispanic [2] participants. It is my hope that this study will be seen as a first step towards a better understanding of these prejudices and the struggles and pain they cause in order to draw more attention to the impact mainstream teachers have in the education of English language learners of color.

## Methodology

At the beginning of the semester this study was conducted, I appealed to the Second Language Acquisition class for participants who would like to talk to me about their tutoring experience. 14 students volunteered for this study, 13 of whom were female. Nine of the females described themselves as White and 4 described themselves as Hispanic. The lone male participant was Hispanic. All White participants were monolingual and had never resided outside the United States. Moreover, all were members of the middle class. Four of the five Hispanic participants were of Mexican origin and had grown up in Spanish-speaking areas of Texas; all four grew up speaking both English and Spanish with their families and friends. The fifth Hispanic participant was originally from Costa Rica, but had moved to the United States as a teenager. Two of the Hispanic participants had always resided in the middle class, while the other 3 grew up as part of the working or farming class. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 45. All participants, except for two, tutored Spanish-speaking children. Most of these children were of Mexican descent.

Most interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and summarized. In the few instances where the tape recorder made a participant nervous, I took notes while we talked, and summarized them immediately after our meetings (Foley, 1990, 1995). When all interviews with a participant were complete, I e-mailed him or her a summary of our interview and asked for comments, clarification, and corrections if necessary (Lather, 1986).

## Findings

Through our conversations, I found that Hispanic and White participants had clear differences in the ways they sought to identify with their tutees, the expectations they formed for the futures of their tutees, and the suggestions they made for intervening on behalf of their tutees.

**Ways of Identifying with Tutees for White Participants**

Many participants brought up the need to "break the ice" and "try to bond" with their tutees. They did this by seeking to identify with their tutees on some basic level. White participants tried to identify with their tutees through shared personality traits or experiences that they perceived as "normal" aspects of growing up. For example, Talia explained that she preferred to work with "kids who resemble me;" particularly kids who were shy, like her. Carol found a connection to the little girl she was tutoring in her "kindness" and "loving nature." Similarly, Ginny told me that she really liked one of her tutees because "he's so considerate and nice." However, when I asked her "Do you ever see yourself in this little boy," she answered with a firm "No."

In discussing how she tried to relate to her tutee, Irma illustrated how difficult it could be for a middle class, White, 27-year-old to relate to an impoverished child of color with limited English proficiency. Irma emphasized that the little girl was "really, really shy," a characteristic with which she could not relate. Throughout our discussion, it was clear that Irma could not identify with the child through either personality or experience. A segment from our interview richly illustrates Irma's frustration:

Irma: And when I ask her what she did over the weekend, she didn't do anything. So, it's like . . . you know that there's a mother, but I don't think that they have a TV. They don't-

Sherry (Interviewer): Why do you think that?

Irma: Oh, I've asked her. When I tried to find out-you know, you try to get close to her-what did you do this weekend? Nothing. Well, did you watch something on TV? No, we don't have one. Well, did you go to a movie? No. You know, so you kind of get the picture.

Sherry: I wonder if you could ask her other things that don't require money, like "*What* did you do?"

Irma: Well, I said, did you go to the park? Uhm, she said no, that she stayed home and helped her mom clean. And so I said, well, you know, what else did you do. You know, I tried to prompt her, and she said, I read a book. Great, I said, what book was it? I don't know? Well, what was it about? I don't know? [mimics valley girl-type intonation] So, uhm, yeah, so you learn to ask the right things, especially. So I learned she doesn't have a TV, they don't do anything. You know, or they don't go out to the movies, you know like the other boy does. You just kind of learn what to ask. And it's just kind of sad because you want to take her and go do something with her. She's really sweet, but . . . .

Throughout her dialogue with L, Irma was trying to find an interest point that she and L shared; however, she focused only on activities that were fun for her: going to the park, watching TV, and going to the movies. Irma did not take into account cultural dif-

ferences she and the child might have had or differences in their life experiences; not everyone considers going to the movies a typical aspect of childhood. Instead, Irma concluded that L and her family did *nothing* and that L's life was not as rich and full as her own. In order to help the girl, she wanted "to take her and go do *something* with her."

Irma felt that L desperately needed someone like herself, a native English speaker, middle class, and White, to help her lead a "normal life" like that of "this other kid that I have. He's been going off to Sea World and he's been dressing fine. Doing okay." In other words, this second child was much more like Irma.

**Ways of Identifying with Tutees for Hispanic Participants**

Rather than seeking to identify with their tutees through shared personality traits, Hispanic participants identified with the "struggles" their tutees were going through in school and in life. Thus, they found it very easy to relate to the life experiences of their tutees. Every Hispanic participant told me that they "know how hard it is" to get through school when one has limited English skills, comes from a marginalized culture, and deals with discrimination. Carola, for example, was keenly aware of the difficulties Hispanic students faced in school. She told me she wanted to be an educator because, "Knowing my deficiencies, knowing my difficulties and struggles... struggling through, through society as a Hispanic woman is [sic] why I want to help other children what [sic] have the same difficulties what [sic] I have."

Elina, too, identified with the struggles of her tutees. One of her tutees, J, was immersed in an English-only kindergarten classroom although she had very limited English skills. Halfway through the semester, J was transferred to a bilingual classroom where she was no longer the only child who spoke Spanish. Elina had this to say about her experience and J's:

> I'm positive, now that I think back on like my childhood and my school years, is that what was about to happen to J happened to me. I mean, I'm like totally convinced that that happened . . . I remember being in second grade and still struggling with reading which, you know, maybe if I had been where I should have been, it wouldn't have been that tough for me. Maybe I slipped through the cracks somehow too . . . . I know how tough it is to come into a school, you know, and pick up another language. I know all of that; I've been through it.

Similarly, Daniel shared how much it hurt him to see his tutee struggling with schoolwork. "I saw it on his face," he said to me when he explained the difficulties his tutee was having. In order to help E get through school and go on to college, he explained, "I personally want him to learn English." English was the most basic skill that Daniel believed would lead E to a successful life.

Katie, a 23 year old from a Texas border town where both her parents were teachers, explained that the Hispanic child she worked with, S, was really smart and very good in some areas, but not so good in others. His math skills were strong, but his English skills were weak. She related her tutee's experiences to her own when she explained,

> What I learned is that it's really easy uhm to - when I was straight out of high school I've always been like, you know, on the honors track and what I realize is, that it's really easy to be honors and not exactly be in an honors class. It's just whether you do the work, whether you read, whether you keep up with everything, to be actually considered intelligent. Because it's like if I don't read, then I can fail quizzes like that [snaps her fingers], you know. It's like easy to get an A or to just you know, bomb something. [Depends on whether you] take the time or not.

Like Daniel, Elina, and Carola, but unlike her White classmates, Katie pinned her tutee's troubles on his language skills, not his inability to learn, nor his deficient home life. Katie astutely recognized how important it was to be considered intelligent by the teachers and counselors who directed the "honors" children toward college and the "regular" children toward work. She knew that she had to actually *be* in the honors classes and recognized by her teachers in order to use the teachers and counselors to her own advantage. In this way, she knew how to avoid being thought of by her teachers in terms of deficits.

**White Participant Expectations of Tutees**

When I asked Carol what kind of future she envisioned for A, she said she "hopes for the best," but then abruptly changed the topic. Rocking back and forth in the chair across from mine, she averted her eyes and said positive things about A's teachers and the school neighborhood. After some analysis of the administrative end, Carol slumped in her chair, stopped rocking, and pointedly stated that she was "avoiding the question of what the future holds." As she finally discussed the question, her voice got very quiet. Finally, she looked me straight in the eye and said, "I don't want to have doubts." A proudly liberal, idealistic young woman, it visibly hurt her to believe that not everyone could become successful. With great sadness, she said that A's reading level was so low, she might never catch up to her English-speaking peers. With a sigh, she added, "She doesn't even have glasses." By the end of this conversation, Carol had sunk down into her chair, her body as drawn and depressed as her thoughts. Her student, little A, was in the second grade at the time of her analysis.

Similarly, in discussing her tutee's future, Irma explained that,

> I could picture someone like [L] dropping out of school . . . because, you know, if you aren't trying hard enough or you're not succeeding, if they

> hold you back a year, you're going to feel really bad. . . . I don't know, if she doesn't get the help she needs, I don't see her going to school that much longer.

Through her words, it is apparent that Irma did see some structural influences on L's predicament (i.e., "if they hold you back..."). However, she also blamed the child for not trying hard enough and being overwhelmed by her inability to succeed. With this assessment, she was at a loss to see how L would one day succeed. Like Carol, Irma appeared to feel guilty about her assessment of her tutee. During our interview, she pulled herself into her chair and drew away from me as she whispered what she seemed to feel were terrible confessions. These future teachers, nearly all of who openly discussed the importance of having high expectations for all children in class, did not know what to make of these low expectations. One eventual assessment a few of them offered was that their own ideas of success and achievement must be very different from those of their students'.

Ginny was a case in point. When I asked her what kind of future she saw unfolding for the child she was working with, she said,

> I worry - I don't know. My standards are so different. My standards are so different from other people's standards and I can't try to impose mine on him, but, uhm, like he - he just seems so, you know how people just sort of follow in the ways of their parents? Naïve in a sense. I think he's real naïve.

She explained that his naïveté must have come from his father, who was from Mexico. His father did not put his money in the bank because he feared that someone might steal it. Ginny, who worked in a bank part-time, saw this naïveté as a weakness that could not be overcome by the child. Even though she had talked at length about how "smart" A was, Ginny expressed that he was too unknowledgeable about the world to "make it."

Over the course of the semester, Carol updated me weekly on her work with A. One day toward the end of the semester, she happily told me that one of the teachers at A's school had found a pair of glasses for A. A few weeks later, she pulled me aside to let me know that for her final paper on her tutoring experience she was going to write about how her idea of success and A's were completely different. The notion that A could reach some kind of success, such as having children or becoming a devoted wife, gave her peace. Still wearing a somewhat guilty look, this notion nevertheless buoyed her.

Of all the White participants I interviewed, only two expressed beliefs that their tutees could go to college and succeed to the degree they, themselves, had. One of these participants was Veronica. Veronica tutored a Chinese boy whose parents had chosen to immerse him in a school with no language support services. Veronica admired this child's ability to learn English and assimilate into American culture rapidly; she professed to have

no worries regarding his future. The only other White participant who had high hopes for her students was Talia, who worked with nine Trinidadian siblings. Only later, when I was compiling the data for this paper, did I realize Talia's students were not English language learners. They all spoke Trinidad's official language, English, and were concentrating more on refining their accents and adjusting to American culture, not acquiring a second language. Consequently, *none* of the White participants who tutored Spanish-speaking children of Latin American descent believed the children would be successful by their own standards. The White participants, all of who were monolingual and monocultural in that they had never lived in a culture other than the US (Fuller, 1994), had trouble setting high expectations for their Hispanic tutees. Their tutees' lack of English proficiency coupled with their non-mainstream American cultures confused the White participants. Moreover, Hispanic tutees were generally very poor, and their families were rarely actively assimilating into mainstream culture. In her study, Sleeter (1993) found that White teachers resented a student's lack of assimilation. While I did not gather a feeling of resentment among my participants, I certainly discerned a sense of bewilderment coupled with pity for the children they believed would not be living the American Dream.

**Hispanic Participant Expectations of Tutees**

Hispanic participants had no trouble separating language skill and cultural knowledge from a child's ability to succeed in school. Moreover, all Hispanic participants expressed the expectations that their tutees could succeed at the same levels they had. Compared to their White counterparts, Hispanic participants had a more sophisticated understanding of what it took to acquire this kind of success. For example, Katie had this to say about the little boy she tutored,

> I'm sure he'll make it. I just wonder how long it's going to take him to catch up to level. Because, uhm, he seems like he's putting effort. He's not there like ah he doesn't want to do his work. No he finishes, it's just that it's all in Spanish and the majority of the class is all in English.
>
> I see success as going to college so he can have a job and make a living, you know. 'Cause now, they pretty much have to go to college to get a job.

Her insight that the child's developing English ability was influencing his grade level achievement put everything else into perspective for Katie. Her own Spanish fluency enabled her to see that he was performing at a high level in Spanish; thus, she was confident in his intellectual ability. Knowing that his first language skills would eventually transfer to his second language (Collier, 1995), Katie was not worried that her tutee would be below grade level for long.

Similarly, Carola said this of her three tutees:

> For me, all of them can make it. Okay, to me, making it is, gee, that's kind of hard because my standards for myself are above what I am right now. I keep reaching for something higher than this. I keep on thinking that some day I may own my own company and have my own employees. Have my own farm maybe, some things like that.

Unlike Ginny, who expressed that her tutee could never achieve the same success she had because of his family and his naïveté, Carola emphasized that her tutees could succeed at *higher* levels than herself at this point in her life. She was confident her students could go on to college, one perhaps becoming a lawyer, another an interior decorator.

**Suggestions for Intervention Offered by White Participants**

When I asked White participants what kind of intervention they would suggest in order to help their students succeed, those working with Hispanic students unanimously recommended outside help for their children's families. For example, when I asked Ginny what could be done to help her tutee succeed according to her standards, she offered this:

> I guess having somebody there to teach you about the world. I guess 'cause his dad was coming from Mexico . . . I guess when you're growing up in a certain area, you have to - like it would be good for him to have a mentor to just take him out and show him places and explain why things are - and figure why this is this and that is that.

In addition to confusing knowledge about the world with knowledge about the U.S., Ginny disregarded the knowledge her tutee's mother may have been able to give her child. Born in Laredo, Texas, this tutee's mother was an American. What Ginny seemed to really mean in her discussion of the world was the importance of learning about, and assimilating into, the dominant American culture.

Similarly, when I asked Irma to imagine what could be done to help her tutee, L, she said,

> Well, definitely have someone English-speaking in her family . . . I really think that when she goes home, she's only speaking in Spanish. Ah, and I think that's a big factor for her learning to read and stuff. I'm thinking that she reads at home in Spanish also. So, uhm, I'd definitely have someone there who would give her some more English speaking practice. Maybe have like a Big Sister or something--one of those groups--come and do stuff with her.

Irma held a particularly strong belief in the deficiencies of L's home life. Her desire to help the child succeed in school was blurred with her desire to help the child become assimilated into mainstream culture. Both Ginny's and Irma's suggestions for intervention, that someone - someone like them - go to the children's homes to "mentor" them and take them out of it, and

to "see some things the other kids are seeing," were pinned to the ethnocentrism of Whiteness [3]. Ginny suggested that only an American could "teach you about the world." Like Irma, Ginny articulated the need for A to be taken out of his home and to be "shown things" children of the dominant culture readily see, like a movie, or in A's case, a bank. Though they may think they are being encouraging, by expecting their students to hold dear the same cultural values and life style they do, teachers such as these young women express their dissatisfaction with children of color through intonation, body language, and the ways they talk about the children with whom they work (Hall & Hall, 1987).

**Suggestions for Intervention Offered by Hispanic Participants**

In our last interviews, I pointedly asked two Hispanic participants what they thought of the recommendations for intervention offered by White participants in the study. Before I could finish asking Carola this question, she furiously nodded her head and then cut me off. "No," she stated. With a sigh, Carola collected herself, smiled, and spoke to me patiently, as if she were teaching a lesson to a small child. She told me that when she gave birth to her daughter, she and the baby were the "only Hispanic people in the hospital." Out of what she considered to be good intentions, but, in fact, racism and ignorance, her doctor recommended that a team of White nurses visit her to make sure she knew how to care for her baby. Carola politely hosted the nurses in her home; however, she kept her baby locked in another room so they could not "take her away." When the nurses decided she was as capable as a "normal" (read White) woman, they left her. This notion that the dominant society "comes in" and "takes out" was not the least bit new to Carola. She was exasperated by it. When I asked Elsa the same question, she angrily protested, "No! *You* take *your* child and show *your* child the things he needs to know." Like Carola, it was clear that she had heard this suggestion before. Hispanic participants all emphasized that supportive teachers, friends, and family were the best intervention for struggling Hispanic students. Indeed, of the Hispanic students who participated in this study, only Katie had been academically supported by her parents (both teachers), school, and community.

## CONCLUSIONS

The most important finding of this study is that the Hispanic preservice teachers I spoke with all held much higher expectations for their Hispanic tutees than their White counterparts. Moreover, they held a much more sophisticated understanding of their tutees' academic, social, and language situations. Hispanic participants, all of whom were bilingual, were able to tease apart the differences between second language skill and intellectual ability; they were also able to relate their own struggles in school to those facing their tutees. All Hispanic participants tried to teach their tutees explicit learning strategies and cultural information

that would help them succeed in school.

White participants, on the other hand, had great difficulty separating language skill from intellectual and academic ability. Though they all characterized their tutees as "bright," none of the White participants who worked with Spanish-speaking children thought their tutees would graduate from high school. The work of Haberman and Post (1998) and the literature on teacher beliefs (e.g., Butt & Townsend, 1990; Doyle, 1997; Lortie, 1975; Paine, 1989; Tiezzi & Cross, 1997) explains these low expectations. It seemed that those participants who could already relate to their tutees, due to their own life experiences, relied on that knowledge to successfully work with their students without much help from the Second Language Acquisition class. However, because White, monolingual, monocultural participants did not gather a lot of explicit methodology from our class, they relied on life experiences *that did not match* that of their students. Our class put these students, and their tutees, at a serious disadvantage.

Furthermore, while Hispanic participants tried to teach their tutees specific success strategies, the privileged social status of the White participants masked for them the specific strategies necessary to succeed academically (Delpit, 1995; McIntosh, 1988). That is, the attainment of success in the eyes of White participants necessitated assimilation into abstract concepts such as having American-centered knowledge about the world, watching movies, visiting amusement parks, and ultimately having a family that spoke English. In the eyes of White participants, immersion in the American Way seemed a necessary prerequisite for success in America. Although they would be surprised to hear it, the young White women in this study, all of who believed their intentions were good, actively embraced deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997) to make sense of their tutees. That is, they believed that the success of their tutees was inhibited by their Hispanic culture.

The words of Banks are particularly relevant here. He writes that teachers are "human beings who bring their prejudices, stereotypes, and misconceptions to the classroom" (Banks, 1991, p. 139). Inevitably, teacher prejudices come to light in a teacher's dealings with, and discussions about, children of color. At the same time, those teachers who have struggled through the same barriers they see their students struggle through often times cannot help but support them in the struggle.

That leaves the question, "Where do we go from here?" It seems that the challenge for teacher educators is to improve teacher education so that it can better reach the students who are less likely to have a shared background with the children they teach. Integrative field experiences where White, monocultural, monolingual teacher education students work intimately with English language learning children of color might be the key to improving the education of White teachers and their students as well. However, as this

study indicates, field experience alone is not enough. To be successful, field experiences must be scaffolded by caring instructors who challenge the prejudices, beliefs, and prevalent misconceptions of their students. In-depth reflection and safe environments that encourage frank discussion are necessary features of this kind of thought-provoking, belief-challenging fieldwork (see Titone, 1998). While the White participants in this study admitted, and sometimes embraced, racism and deficit thinking, they also professed to care deeply about children and to love teaching. It is my hope that improving teacher education and further delving into the areas of teacher beliefs and prejudices will enable these passionate, idealistic young teacher education students to achieve their dreams of becoming loving, successful teachers to all children. At the same time, further studies in this area need to be methodologically bulletproof so that issues like those raised in this study will be taken seriously.

## NOTES

[1] In this paper, the term "White" refers to people of Anglo-European descent.

[2] I realize that the term "Hispanic" is an essentializing term that does not adequately express the cultural and geographic differences between Spanish-speaking peoples; however, I chose this label, while acknowledging its limitations, because it is the word my Spanish-speaking students most frequently used to label their own ethnic identity.

[3] Hartigan (1999) defines *Whiteness* "as a concept that reveals and explains the racial interests of White people, linking them collectively to a position of social dominance" (p. 16). He goes on to explain that "Whiteness effectively names practices pursued by Whites in the course of maintaining a position of social privilege and political dominance in this country" (p. 16).

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